

**YOUTH SPORTS AND  
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION**



## **COVID-19 INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH SPORTS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**

Santa Cruz County Public Health provides these recommendations on school sports and extracurricular activities for public and private K-12 schools operating in Santa Cruz County, along with other youth sports and extracurricular activities outside of the school setting, including, but not limited to, team sports, individual sports, band, chorus and clubs.

The purpose of these recommendations is to reduce the incidence and spread of COVID-19 infection in our communities by supporting a safer environment for all who participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, including participants and families. Following these recommendations is important regardless of the vaccination rates among adults or children. Please also review the [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 schools](#) for further recommendations that also take into consideration county transmission rates, and the [California Department of Public Health's \(CDDH\) Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year, updated Sept. 1, 2021 and the associated FAQs for CDPH K-12 guidance](#). The CDPH has also updated its [Face Coverings FAQ](#) with information relevant to non-school activities. We further recommend reviewing the [CDC COVID Tracker](#), case data on the [Santa Cruz County Public Health COVID Dashboard](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics, COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports and Physical Activity](#).

Additionally, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education provides [helpful resources for students and families](#).

Santa Cruz County Public Health encourages school-based and extracurricular activities. However, additional protective measures are necessary due to the highly contagious Delta variant. Public Health recommends the following precautions for all youth sports and extracurricular activities in Santa Cruz County:

- 1. Masks are Required Indoors for all Participants, Coaches, Personnel and Spectators**  
Masks decrease risks of transmission indoors. Everyone must wear face masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status, in accordance with County orders requiring face coverings indoors ([English](#)) ([Español](#)). Masks are required for both competition and practice, during physical education, conditioning/weightlifting, and other indoor activities. When the County enters a level at or lower than the Moderate level of

Community Transmission as defined by the [CDC COVID Tracker](#), these requirements will become recommendations.

Current County orders requiring face coverings indoors include an exemption for those who are “performing an activity that cannot be done while wearing a face covering.”

These activities include:

- Indoor water sports such as swimming, water polo or diving. Participants must wear face masks when not in the water.
- Wrestling and certain martial arts where masks could become a choking hazard. Participants must wear masks when not actively engaged in a match.
- Cheerleading (tumbling/stunting/flying) and gymnastics (while on the different apparatuses) because the mask may get caught on objects and become a choking hazard or accidentally impair vision. Participants must wear masks when not actively engaged in the activity.
- During matches/competitions/performances due to the risk of overheating or suffocation, at the discretion of league officials. Participants must wear masks when not actively engaged in the activity.
- When playing the flute. Musicians playing other wind instruments (woodwind, brass) where the mouth forms a seal over the valve should use a mask with a slit and bell covers. Participants must wear full masks when not performing.

## 2. **Face Coverings are Strongly Recommended Outdoors**

This includes crowded situations when distancing between individuals or households is not practical or possible, such as stands, stadiums, sidelines, concerts, etc. While outdoors is generally a lower risk setting for COVID-19 transmission, spread of COVID-19 outdoors can and does occur especially when individuals are unmasked and in close proximity.

## 3. **COVID-19 Vaccination is Strongly Recommended for All Participants Who Are Eligible for Vaccination, as Well as Coaches, Staff and Volunteers**

Districts, schools, leagues, clubs, teams, organizations and tournaments/events can require that all participants and personnel be fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

Having all athletes and staff in your league fully vaccinated greatly decreases the risk of transmission among teammates and between teams, and will provide excellent protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. It will also decrease disruption in team

activities, since fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine if they are close contacts to a case of COVID-19.

**4. When Transmission is High, it is Safest to Limit or Modify High-Risk Sports and Extracurricular Activities**

These include indoor sports, outdoor football, water polo, and other activities that involve singing, shouting, band, or exercise, especially when conducted indoors, to youth who are fully vaccinated, as noted in [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in schools](#).

Singing or shouting in particular have been demonstrated to easily transmit COVID-19 among unvaccinated persons.

High-risk sports include but are not limited to basketball, volleyball, boxing, American football, indoor soccer, ice hockey, martial arts with sparring, cheer, water polo, wrestling, dance (indoors with groups or partners), racquetball, squash and kickball.

**5. Regular Testing of Unvaccinated Participants and Staff, Including Volunteers, In High-Risk Activities**

If it is not feasible to limit participation to fully vaccinated individuals, perform regular COVID-19 screening testing in **unvaccinated** youth and staff involved with all indoor high-risk sports and extracurricular activities. Where resources allow, consider testing for all sports and extracurricular activities. Testing is less essential for asymptomatic people who are fully vaccinated or who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days.

**6. Testing Types and Frequency**

- a. Testing of unvaccinated and vaccinated athletes is recommended once a week if using a PCR test, such as school-based Color or Cue PCR tests, or PCR testing performed at a clinic or medical facility. Quarantine practices should follow CDPH's [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#).
- b. Twice weekly testing is recommended if using a rapid antigen test, such as BinaxNOW.
  - i. A positive antigen test from someone who is asymptomatic (has no COVID-19 symptoms) should be retested with a PCR test within 24-72 hours to confirm. These tests should be treated as true positives and patients should be advised to isolate, and close contacts to quarantine, until confirmatory PCR results are back.
  - ii. A negative antigen test in a symptomatic individual should be retested with a PCR test within 24-72 hours to confirm. *This scenario should be*

*uncommon as people with symptoms are instructed to stay home until they have been tested and received a negative result.*

- c. Do not accept home/self-testing results.
- d. Individuals who test positive should be sent directly home to isolate. They should not continue to participate in activities outside the home even with social distancing.

**7. Relocating the Following High-Risk Extracurricular Group Activities Outdoors, When Practical, is Recommended:**

- a. Cheer, stunt, drill team, etc.
- b. Wrestling, gymnastics and water sports or other indoor activities where masks are not practical
- c. Choir, or any singing
- d. Drama and dance
- e. Playing wind instruments

**8. Prevent Spread Of COVID-19 Off the Field**

Remind participants and families that COVID-19 often spreads off-the-field, especially in situations when groups let their guard down and eat or socialize together with their masks off (post-game parties, locker rooms, carpools). Team post-game meals, for example, could significantly elevate transmission risk, particularly if held indoors.

**Locker rooms**

- Limit congregating in locker rooms
  - Players should arrive dressed to play as much as possible.
  - Use locker rooms only to change or use the restroom. Don't use the locker room for coaching or pregame, halftime or postgame talks.
  - Avoid having different teams use a locker room at the same time.
- Ensure mask use in locker rooms.
  - Consider encouraging players/participants to shower at home.

**Transportation**

- Team buses and vans
  - Masks are required per existing statewide face covering guidance.
  - Keep windows open. Turn the fan on high and set it to outdoor air.
  - If more than one vehicle is used, have the same people ride together.
- Carpooling

- Encourage participants and staff who carpool to ride with the same people each time travel occurs.
- Everyone in the vehicle should wear a face mask.
- Open the windows. Turn the fan on high and set it to outdoor air.

## **Travel**

- When traveling overnight, team members not from the same household should sleep in separate rooms or in consistent groups when feasible. Keep masks on whenever visiting other members' hotel rooms.
- Socializing with other teams is strongly discouraged.
- Teams that travel out-of-state or outside the Bay Area are encouraged to follow CDC recommendations for quarantine after travel.